

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 305687

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TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

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TAGS: SENV, CG

SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF OKAPI BY OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO.

1. LAWRENCE CURTIS, DIRECTOR OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO AND LEON LEOPARD, AN ANIMAL TRANSPORTER, WILL BE VISITING KINSHASA THE WEEK OF JANUARY 12. MR. CURTIS WISHES TO OBTAIN SELECTED RARE ANIMALS FOR THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO AND CONTACTED SENATOR HENRY BELLMON TO ASK HIS INTERCESSION WITH THE DEPARTMENT IN ARRANGING HIS TRIP.

2. IN ORDER TO BE RESPONSIVE WITHIN THE TIME ALLOTTED PERTINENT EXCERPTS OF CURTIS' CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWS. REQUEST THE EMBASSY ASSIST WHERE POSSIBLE AND GIVE DEPARTMENT GOZ'S INITIAL REACTION TO CURTIS' PROPOSAL BY COB WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7.

3. QUOTE WHEN ZAIRE WAS THE BELGIUM CONGO THERE WAS A SPECIAL BIOLOGICAL STATION ESTABLISHED NEAR LEOPOLDVILLE FOR THE CAPTURE, ACCLIMATITION AND EXPORT OF OKAPI TO ZOOS. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE NO OKAPI LEFT THE CONGO EXCEPT FOR A PAIR RECENTLY SENT TO THE NEW MADRID ZOO IN SPAIN. WE HAVE HEARD THAT PRESIDENT

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 305687

MOBUTU IS A KEEN SUPPORTER OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

AND HAS NURTURED THE OKAPI FOR PROPAGATION PURPOSES WITHIN THE REPUBLIC. AS WITH PANDAS IN CHINA, WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRESIDENT CONSIDERS THE OKPAI AS AN ANIMAL SUITABLE AS A GIFT FOR FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS FRIENDLY TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE.

THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO HAS AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION FOR THE BREEDING OF RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILDLIFE IN CAPTIVITY. THIS REPUTATION IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WITH REFERENCE TO UNGULATES OR HOOFED ANIMALS INCLUDING GIRAFFE AND POTENTIALLY TO INCLUDE THE OKAPI. THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO ALSO ENGAGES IN AN EXTENSIVE EXCHANGE PROGRAM OF RARE ANIMALS WITH ZOOS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD. THE BREEDING PROGRAM AT THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO IS EXTENSIVE, INCLUDING MANY SPECIES NOT LIMITED TO UNGULATES, AND MANY OF THE SPECIMENS IN THE ZOO ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER BY MANY OTHER ZOOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS.

A PRIMARY METHOD BY WHICH MODERN ZOOS OBTAIN RARE ANIMALS IS THROUGH EXCHANGE OF RARE SPECIES RATHER THAN PURCHASE. IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE OKAPI FROM THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE, WE HAVE DEVELOPED THE FOLLOWING THREE OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

A. AN EXCHANGE OF ANIMALS FROM THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE FOR OKAPI (AND AS STATED ABOVE, WE HAVE A VARIETY OF ANIMAL SPECIES CONSIDERED AS PREMIUM ANIMALS BY MANY OF THE GREAT ZOOS OF THE WORLD).

B. WE WOULD PROPOSE TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE ZOOS OF ZAIRE A VARIETY OF ZOOLOGICAL EXPERTISE, SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT IN ORDER TO DEVELOP AND ENHANCE THE EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, AND HUSBANDRY PROGRAMS OF THEIR ZOOS. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE ARE TWO ZOOS CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED IN THE REPUBLIC (SEE ATTACHED CORRESPONDENCE). IN THESE REGARDS, OUR ZOO COULD PROVIDE A VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT INCLUDING ANIMAL RESTRAINT DEVICES, VETERINARY SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT, UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 305687

ETC., LIBRARY ITEMS INCLUDING A BOOK WHICH THE UNDERSIGNED AUTHORED FOR THE AMERICAN ZOO ASSOCIATION ON ZOO DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONAL BASICS, IN ADDITION TO CONSULTATION EXPERTISE FROM STAFF MEMBERS IN OUR ZOO COVERING A VARIETY OF AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL ZOO MANAGEMENT.

C. OUR ZOO MAY BE IN A POSITION TO SPONSOR ONE OR TWO

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL FROM THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE FOR ONE OR MORE YEAR'S STUDY AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY IN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT. OUR ZOO ENJOYS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY IN OUR EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS. A WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP TO THE UNIVERSITY FOR A QUALIFIED STUDENT FROM ZAIRE COULD BE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROGRAM. OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY ENJOYS AN EXCELLENT WORLDWIDE REPUTATION IN ITS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS. A YEAR SPENT AT STILLWATER BY A STUDENT FROM ZAIRE OR PERHAPS A PROFESSIONAL IN THEIR GAME DEPARTMENT WOULD BE A REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR THEIR PROGRAM.

THESE ARE THE OPTIONS WHICH WE ARE CONSIDERING. DEPENDING ON THE INTEREST OF THE PROFESSIONALS IN ZAIRE AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM FOR ONE, TWO OR PERHAPS ELEMENTS OF ALL THREE OF THESE OPTIONS MIGHT BE DEVELOPED. CERTAINLY, OUR INTEREST IS TO ACQUIRE OKAPI AS WELL AS ESTABLISH CLOSER LIAISON WITH ZOOS OF ZAIRE. AND IT WOULD APPEAR QUITE FEASIBLE THAT THIS KIND OF PROGRAM WOULD BE ATTRACTIVE TO THEM AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.

IN ORDER TO FULLY EXPLORE THIS PROGRAM, WE ARE INTERESTED IN ARRANGING A VISIT WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU HIMSELF. AS NOTED ABOVE, WE ARE AWARE OF HIS KEEN INTEREST IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN GENERAL, AND THE FUTURE SECURITY OF THE OKAPI. ONE RECOGNIZED ELEMENT FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ENDANGERED WILDLIFE IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF BREEDING GROUPS OF ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY AND THE OKAPI WOULD BE NO EXCEPTION TO THIS. A BREEDING GROUP OF OKAPI IN A MAJOR ZOO IN MIDDLE AMERICA WOULD HAVE OBVIOUS TOURISM AND PUBLIC UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 305687

RELATIONS VALUE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE. WE THINK THAT ALL OF THE ELEMENTS OF THIS PROGRAM WOULD BE COLLECTIVELY OF INTEREST TO THE PRESENT AND WORTHY OF A BRIEF DISCUSSION WITH HIM.

I WILL BE TRAVELING TO ZAIRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH MR. LEON LEOPARD OF LORENA, TEXAS. MR. LEOPARD IS RECOGNIZED IN ZOOLOGICAL CIRCLES AS AN ACCOMPLISHED ANIMAL TRANSPORTER, QUITE COMPETENT IN THE ARRANGING OF EXPORTS, QUARANTINE AND SOLVING THE MYRAID OF REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN THE TRANSPORT OF OVERSEAS SHIPMENTS. IN THIS RESPECT, MR. LEOPARD WOULD BE WORKING WITH US IN IMPORTING THE OKAPI TO OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO. UNQUOTE. ROBINSON

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